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ABSTRACT

The United States has been called a "melting pot," a container in which separate materials are heated and blended. When people call the United States a melting pot, they are using a metaphor for the blending of cultures that some feel has occurred in this country. Others doubt that America has been a melting pot, and many doubt that it should be. These issues are debated for young people in terms of what it means to be American. The idea popularized by Israel Zangwill's play "The Melting Pot" is that the United States would absorb and transform all immigrants. In fact, immigrants have not found the melting process smooth. The experiences of African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, and other ethnic groups are described. The debate about the importance of multiculturalism will not be soon resolved, but Americans on both sides might consider the compromise involved in a Pledge of Allegiance that refers to "one nation, united in our diversity." (Contains 1 graph and 14 suggestions for further reading.) (SLD)

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